

FAQs for the Necropsy Results for the Humpback Whale Stranding on Long Island, NY

1. What information does a necropsy report include?

The general term of 'necropsy report' is in fact referring to a complete **case** report that summarizes an entire stranding event from the first observation of an animal to the end of the entire investigation of that particular event. A Case Report includes the following components:

- ***Gross Necropsy Report (GNR)***

The Gross Necropsy Report summarizes the information collected on the beach at the time of the stranding and becomes the official record of the observations on the carcass. It is generated/compiled by the necropsy team leader and may include the following components:

1. Event and response timeline
2. Evaluation of Human Interaction Form
3. Level A Stranding Form
4. External Morphometrics Form
5. Blubber Thickness Measurement Form
6. Photograph Log
7. Wound Analysis Form
8. Gross Necropsy Findings and Descriptions
9. Necropsy Participants/Attendees
10. Sample Collection and Distribution Log

- ***Histopathology Report:*** The Histopathology Report may be generated by one or more pathologists depending upon the organizations involved. It follows directly from observations made in the Gross Necropsy Report. It presents the results of various staining and visualization techniques employed on sampled tissues to elucidate diseases and/or types of trauma. The pathologist working on the case will also investigate findings at the tissue level that were not obvious at the gross examination. If multiple pathologists are involved, a final Histopathology Report will be compiled and incorporated into the case report.

- ***Case Report:*** The Case Report represents the total findings from the case, including the identification of the animal, if known; the history of the animal; the specifics of the stranding event; gross, histological, and ancillary diagnostic findings; cause of death (if determined); hindcasting (if warranted); environmental data; and any other analytical results on the animal. The Case Report is sent out for external review by outside experts (including but not limited to: large whale biologists, necropsy team leaders, veterinarians and other pathologists). When the review is complete the Case Report can be released.

2. The humpback whale stranding occurred in April-why is there a delay in the case report?

A thorough external and internal examination was completed on this whale. As part of a thorough necropsy, several sets of tissue and biological samples were collected for analysis. In addition to the standard samples collected on necropsy established in current standard operating procedures, further sampling was conducted of the drug injection sites to evaluate the animal's response at the tissue level to the administered sedatives. The collected samples were then sent to diagnostic laboratories for analysis. Testing pending includes microscopic examination of organs (histopathology) and tissue drug concentration determination. The purpose of histopathology is to determine any possible changes in organs that may have contributed to the stranding. These findings are coupled with the gross findings (necropsy) and other diagnostic test results. In some cases, microscopic findings can lead to a need for additional diagnostic testing. Given the complexity of this case and the additional samples collected, further time is needed to analyze all samples, document the findings, and review the findings with additional pathologists.

3. Who is responsible for the case report?

Given the complexity of this case, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA NMFS) worked with several partner organizations to respond to this whale and conduct a thorough investigation of the event. NOAA NMFS will be compiling information and data collected by all of the partner organizations to incorporate into the complete Case Report for review. Once a complete review of the case report is conducted, NOAA NMFS will make the report available to the public. More information will be provided when the report is finalized.

More information on the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program can be found at the following website:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health>

**Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program
Office of Protected Resources
NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service**

**Protected Resources Division
Northeast Regional Office
NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service**